

WOMAN'S COLLEGE  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

HONORS PAPERS

1959/1960

Part 1

Greensboro, North Carolina

1960

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Approved by

Director

CREATING MOSAICS

Examining Committee

Helen Thomas

Sarah Davis

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by

Helen Zezefillis

Submitted as an Honors Paper  
in the  
Department of Art

Woman's College of the University of North Carolina  
Greensboro  
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## Creating Mosaics

The Honors problem with which I was involved this year

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which took place during the research period, was a submission point with the present problem itself, composed of five mosaics. The selection was made after an experience which was a partial fulfillment of the requirements of an art course at the Woman's College. The experience was rewarding in that there was a personal realization that this form of expression allowed the artist to combine with his knowledge and feeling for color and line usage in painting his knowledge and feeling for a more structural form of art expression. My plan was to use a variety of materials, such as stones, shells, wood pieces and other discovered and selected materials of early art periods to create mosaics in personally styled compositions. After a conference with my advisor it was decided that this type of project would not be of significant value, since the emphasis might be on the search for new and different materials rather than on aesthetic problems and values. Thus my advisor and I decided on a very beautiful art medium, the Italian glass tile, beautiful in its color intensity and range and exciting in its smoothness, heaviness, and coldness of surface. The

## Creating Mosaics

The Honors problem with which I was involved this year was a study of mosaics, beginning with mental preparation which took place during the research period and reaching a culmination point with the presentation of the project itself, composed of five mosaics. The selection of the problem occurred after an experience which I had the previous year in the construction of a ceramic tile mosaic, originated in partial fulfillment of the requirements of an art course at the Woman's College. The experience was rewarding in that there was a personal realization that this form of expression allowed the artist to combine with his knowledge and feeling for color and line usage in painting his knowledge and feeling for a more structural form of art expression. My plan was to use a variety of materials, such as stones, shells, wood pieces and other discovered and selected materials of early art periods to create mosaics in personally styled compositions. After a conference with my advisor it was decided that this type of project would not be of significant value, since the emphasis might be on the search for new and different materials rather than on aesthetic problems and values. Thus my advisor and I decided on a very beautiful art medium, the Italian glass tile, beautiful in its color intensity and range and exciting in its smoothness, heaviness, and coldness of surface. The

next step was to decide on mosaic compositions. This is not an easy task for the artist, since he alone must decide on what his creative experience will encompass.

With the arrival of the glass tiles a very strenuous and frustrating preparation began. My advisor had suggested that a number of carefully planned and painted compositions be made before the actual mosaic creations were attempted. His suggestion was not fully accepted, since it is my personal feeling that compositions which are planned in one medium and executed in another tend to lose a certain amount of spontaneity. However, I attempted to paint a composition in water colors which I could later transfer to the mosaic medium. At that time I had planned to break the glass tile cubes into varying irregular but smoothly broken bits. When the attempt was made to do this, I realized that glass tile does not lend itself to cutting; it has a tendency to shatter into highly irregular shapes. My advisor and I decided that the medium was beautiful in its own form and did not necessitate alteration. Thus a new frustration arose. How could I possibly portray or suggest the rounded shapes of the water color composition in this mosaic medium? Compositions to suit the medium must be made. This meant that I, the artist, must well-acquaint myself with my material. Thus I proceeded to study carefully the medium, to note its colors, its shape, its texture and its strength. Then by



placing tiles of various colors next to each other, compositions stressing form, line, and color began to emerge. Shapes taken from nature but not natural in themselves, when placed together with careful thought and sensitivity and regard for color harmony, may produce other very lively and exciting shapes which fused together in one single rectangle produce a very handsome composition. Four of the compositions were planned in this manner; the other was planned mentally and executed according to this plan.

Considering the natural limitations of the medium, its unalterable form and size, its smoothness of texture, and its very strong and definite colors, I was able to express in the five mosaics a feeling and understanding which I have for the elements of form. I borrowed from the earth its rather geometrical shapes and used them in the chosen medium to express that which is worthy of recording. I found this to be not only an enjoyable experience but an enlightening one, for I learned much about the medium and about my own feelings for line, color, and their relationships in composition.

# Financial Considerations

(approximations)

Italian Glass Tiles	\$ 95.00
4 cans 3-M Glue	8.00
20 lbs groute	5.00
5 pieces of wood	7.90
Film	2.50
Railway Express Carrying Charges	5.90

\$ 124.30

(additional expense not yet considered:  
cost of 12 developed color slides)